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Chairman: Mr. de Rojas ..... (Venezuela)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 96: Sectoral policy questions (*continued*)

(a) Industrial development cooperation (*continued*) (A/C.2/52/L.16)

Draft resolution on industrial development cooperation (A/C.2/52/L.16)

1. **Mr. Kisiri** (United Republic of Tanzania), introduced draft resolution A/C.2/52/L.16 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and drew attention to a minor correction.

Agenda item 98: Environment and sustainable development (*continued*) (A/52/25, A/52/112, A/52/217-S/1997/507, A/52/284, A/52/318, A/52/347, A/52/447-S/1997/775, A/52/460, A/52/514-S/1997/815)

(a) Implementation of decisions and recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (*continued*) (A/52/3, A/52/413)

(g) Special session for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21 (*continued*) (A/52/280, A/52/413)

2. **Mr. Asadi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the outcome of the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly had revealed a mixture of achievements and failure. While the international community had managed to arrive at new agreements and while a number of legal instruments had entered into force, the trend towards the degradation of the environment continued.

3. Although the interdependence between development and the environment had been recognized, there was a growing trend towards undue emphasis on the environment and away from overall developments. For a substantial part of the world community for whom mere survival was the order of the day, environmental protection might seem an unaffordable luxury.

4. Sustainable development could not be achieved by developing a body of legal instruments on particular sectoral issues while at the same time, ignoring international commitments designed to facilitate the implementation of those provisions. The gradual yet perceptible retreat from multilateral commitments — as demonstrated by the declining levels of official development assistance and the failure to transfer of technology combined with exhortations directed at the developing world to rely instead on private foreign investment — was disturbing.

5. The principle of "common but differentiated responsibility" was an essential accomplishment of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. In the areas of sustainable development, peace and security, confidence and confidence-building was imperative. Building and maintaining confidence depended on the genuine commitment to and compliance with the norms and rules of international law by all countries.

6. His Government believed the realization of sustainable development on a global scale required a combination of mutually reinforcing national and international policies as defined in part II of the agreed conclusions 1997/1 adopted by the Economic and Social Council at its recent substantive session.

7. Regarding efforts in his own country, he said that Iran had become a party to all existing legal instruments and agreements concerning the environment. The portion of the budget allocated to environmental protection had increased substantially in recent years and his Government had been trying to formulate economic plans and policies which were sustainable in the long term. A national commission for sustainable development had been established. The fact that the newly-appointed head of the Organization for the Protection of the Environment had been given the rank of Vice-President demonstrated that, in future, sustainable development in general, and environmental protection in particular, would receive a higher level of attention.

8. **Mr. Winnick** (United States of America), speaking in exercise of the right of reply recalled that, at the previous meeting, the representative of Iraq had blamed the international coalition, of which his country was a prominent member, for a number of environmental problems facing her country. In fact, the Gulf War had been the result of unprovoked Iraqi aggression, which had been contained by the international coalition. Rather than blaming the international coalition, it might be more appropriate to consider Iraq's documented and massive production and stockpiling of chemical and biological weapons. His delegation called on Iraq to comply fully and immediately with all relevant Security Council resolutions, and in particular, to cooperate fully with the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM), by destroying its chemical and biological weapon stockpiles and their related production facilities.

9. **Ms. Khammas** (Iraq), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the war against Iraq had not been a "clean" war as previously alleged by the representative of the United States of America. The United States and its allies had used hundreds of bombs and radiation weapons in the south of

Iraq and the toxic projectiles had been left behind. In a letter dated 6 December 1994, the United Kingdom Secretary of State for Defence had admitted that British troops had used 88 depleted uranium rounds in the war against Iraq and that the United States had used many more than that. He had also admitted that when they impacted with a hard surface, they emitted radioactive and toxic substances resulting in a health hazard.

10. The widely publicized Gulf War syndrome affected not only the soldiers of the United States and its allies, but also those of Iraq. Furthermore, radioactive materials could still be found on the ground between Iraq and Kuwait and the children of the area were using them as toys.

(c) Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind (A/52/413)

(e) Convention on Biological Diversity (A/52/413, A/52/441)

(f) Implementation of the outcome of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (A/52/319 and A/52/413)

11. **Mr. Juma** (Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity), introducing the report of the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (A/52/441, Annex) said that the Conference of the Parties had thus far adopted decisions dealing with marine and coastal biological diversity, agricultural biological diversity and forest biological diversity. At its fourth meeting it would consider fresh water biological diversity.

12. Overall, in the past five years, one of the major achievements of the Conference of the Parties had been to translate relevant chapters of Agenda 21 into programmes for implementation at the national level. The application of a holistic ecosystem approach — in which plants, animals, micro-organisms and human beings functioned as one unit — provided a framework for an integrated approach to the achievement of sustainable development objectives.

13. At their third meeting, the Conference of the Parties had focused on agricultural biological diversity and had decided to establish a multi-year programme, using an ecosystem or integrated land use approach. The programme was being implemented in close cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). In that connection, the Conference of the Parties was cooperating with the FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, which was seeking to bring its activities into harmony with the Convention on Biological Diversity.

14. At the same meeting, the Conference had asked the Executive Secretary to develop a focused work programme for forest biological diversity. Accordingly the Subsidiary Body for Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice had prepared recommendations on, *inter alia*, holistic and intersectoral ecosystem approaches that integrated the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity with socioeconomic considerations; and scientific analysis of the ways in which human activities, in particular forest management practices, influenced biological diversity. Efforts in that area were being pursued in close cooperation with the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests and the Inter-agency Task Force on Forests.

15. The Conference of the Parties had also considered the exploitation of traditional knowledge gleaned from indigenous and local communities, a topic, which was closely linked to the *in situ* conservation of biodiversity, and had dealt with a set of other issues which cut across ecosystem considerations.

16. The Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on Biosafety had been asked to complete its elaboration of a protocol on biosafety by the end of 1998. It had produced a consolidated draft negotiating text which it would consider in February 1998.

17. Finally, he said that at its fourth meeting, the Conference of the Parties would discuss relationships with other biodiversity-related conventions, institutions and processes. It would also consider the sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources. In that connection, he expressed the hope that the General Assembly would urge countries to complete their national reports, which were to form the basis for assessing the implementation of the objectives of the Convention by the international community and the type of further guidance that countries would need. Thus far, only three national reports had been received.

18. **Ms. Waller-Hunter** (Director of the Division for Sustainable Development) introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the outcome of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (A/52/319), said that the Commission on Sustainable Development, at its fifth session, had decided to undertake a review of those chapters of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States for which there were no corresponding chapters in Agenda 21. It had also recommended the convening of a two-day special session of the General Assembly immediately prior to its

fifty-fourth session in 1999 for the in-depth assessment and appraisal of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. The Commission had decided to carry out a full review during its seventh session in 1999, thereby acting as a preparatory mechanism for the special session of the General Assembly. The General Assembly, during its nineteenth special session, had indicated that a special session for the review of issues pertaining to small island developing States would contribute significantly to achieving the objectives of the Barbados Conference.

19. Concerning progress on the implementation of resolution 51/183, she drew attention to a number of observations contained in the report of the Secretary-General. Work on the formulation of a vulnerability index, resource mobilization, the Small Island Developing States Technical Assistance Programme (SIDSTAP) and the Small Island Developing States Information Network (SIDSNET) had been initiated by Governments, organizations of the United Nations system and regional organizations. Technical work on the vulnerability index was under way and would be reviewed by an expert group meeting in December. The results of that meeting would be submitted to the Committee for Development Planning and, subsequently, to the Commission on Sustainable Development.

20. In connection with resource mobilization for the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was coordinating the preparation of project documents by six Governments, which could seek assistance from United Nations and other organizations at the regional level if wished. Those project portfolios would be submitted at a meeting of representatives of the six Governments with prospective donors, to be arranged by the Department for Economic and Social Affairs in conjunction with UNDP. She encouraged both the small island developing States and prospective bilateral and multilateral donors to support the initiative.

21. As for progress on SIDSTAP, she said that UNDP had designed a technical assistance programme covering 14 chapters of the Barbados Programme of Action. It had also launched a pilot information network for small island developing States to enable those States to exchange information through the Internet.

22. In conclusion, she was pleased to note that a number of organizations, including non-governmental organizations, were currently implementing activities relating to small island developing States. As had been the case with Agenda 21, infrastructure at the national, regional and international level had had to be established before implementation could actually begin. However, activities were now gaining momentum and she hoped that genuine progress would be achieved by the special session of the General Assembly scheduled for 1999.

23. **Mr. Kamando** (United Republic of Tanzania), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that it was unfair and unacceptable that the developing countries, which were struggling to attain decent standards of living, should be requested to curtail their industrial activities and reduce their emissions while the industrialized countries maintained their unsustainable production and consumption patterns. In that context, the Group of 77 and China strongly believed that, in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, developed countries must not only reduce their emissions but also modify their longer-term anthropogenic emissions and their production and consumption patterns. The proposal by the Group of 77 and China, calling on the developed countries to reduce emissions by 7.5 per cent below 1990 levels by the year 2000, by 15 per cent by the year 2010 and by 35 per cent by the year 2020 merited serious consideration. In that connection, the Group of 77 and China urged the developed countries to meet the targets for the reduction of greenhouse gases outlined in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

24. The Group of 77 and China attached great importance to the Convention on Biological Diversity and welcomed the progress achieved in the implementation of Agenda 21 through its focus on marine and coastal biodiversity, agricultural biological diversity, forest biological diversity and inland waters. The Convention was a vital instrument for translating international commitments into national action. Resources available for that purpose must be increased in order to address the needs of developing countries. The Group of 77 and China was encouraged to learn that negotiations for a protocol on biosafety were at an advanced stage. The Parties to the Convention must redouble their efforts in order to ensure that those negotiations were finalized by the end of 1998.

25. It was to be hoped that the Parties to the Convention would heed the appeal to submit their reports on its implementation by 31 December 1997 and that the Conference of the Parties would make every effort to make biodiversity-related scientific knowledge available to the entire United Nations system. The Group of 77 and China urged donors to make adequate financial resources available for the implementation of the Convention through the Global Environment Facility and bilateral channels.

26. The Group of 77 and China welcomed the progress attained in a number of priority areas of concern to small-island developing countries, particularly United Nations support for the system-wide implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. They also welcomed the outcomes of the fifth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, in particular the recommendations on expediting the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action.

27. **Mr. Schumacher** (Luxembourg), speaking on behalf of the European Union and also Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia, said that in a few weeks, the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change would meet in Kyoto to determine the course of international efforts to control greenhouse gas emissions for the coming decades. He reaffirmed the European Union proposal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 7.5 per cent below 1990 levels by 2005, with the goal of a 15 per cent reduction by 2010. With the accelerating pace of their development, the developing countries would have to bear their share of responsibility for limiting emissions in the future.

28. In view of the potential negative effects of climate change in many areas, delegations must make use of the time remaining to reconsider their positions and set ambitious and realistic targets. Given the continued deterioration of the ozone layer, the European Union welcomed the recent agreement to eliminate the use of methyl bromide in the developed countries by 2005 and in the developing countries by 2015. He recalled, however, that the European Union had favoured the total elimination of methyl bromide in the developed countries by 2001, with a 10-year grace period for the developing countries.

29. With regard to the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the European Union believed that the design and implementation of national strategies, plans and programmes, in accordance with article 6 of the Convention, continued to be of particular importance. At the 1996 Conference of the Parties, it had been decided that such national strategies should include conservation of biological diversity *in situ* and *ex situ*, integration of biodiversity into relevant sectoral policies and equitable distribution of the benefits derived from the use of genetic resources. The European Union would participate actively in implementing the multi-year programme aimed at mitigating the negative effects of agriculture on biodiversity.

30. The relationship between the sustainable development of small island developing States and climate change and natural disaster prevention was clear, and the European Union therefore welcomed the close cooperation between the secretariat of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction and other bodies of the United Nations system. It also welcomed the efforts to develop a vulnerability index, and to promote rational use of energy resources and access to computer networks.

31. **Mr. Guarini** (United States of America) said that the international community had taken a number of significant steps towards creating institutional mechanisms to deal with several of the environmental challenges currently facing the world. For example, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa had been negotiated and had entered into force and over 80 countries had already signed the Framework Convention on Climate Change. Most importantly, an international consensus had been established that climate change was a topic which must be discussed and acted on.

32. Turning to natural disaster reduction, he said that the United States was taking action to address the potential effects of the climatic disturbance known as El Niño. It was placing priority on research and monitoring activities and exchange of information among climatologists and experts in agriculture, water management and natural disaster relief. Internationally, the United States Agency for International Development was making its personnel aware of the effects of the last El Niño and of the resources it had available to assist in responding to that type of natural disaster.

33. With regard to small island developing States, his Government was looking forward to the special session of the General Assembly that would be devoted to the review of progress made in implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action.

34. **Mr. Slade** (Samoa), speaking on behalf of the members of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) which were Member States of the United Nations, said that the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States had provided recognition of the special needs of small islands and understanding of the unique challenges they faced. Of course, sustainable development must commence with national efforts, but the AOSIS countries were disappointed at the loss of momentum in international support for the Barbados Programme of Action. They had hoped that the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly would have provided an opportunity to gain the momentum, but that had not been the

case. They called on their developed country partners to reaffirm their commitment to sustainable development through increased financing and technical assistance and applauded the efforts of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to facilitate resource mobilization by holding a donor conference to review the project portfolios prepared by small island States. The development of a vulnerability index and the Small Island States Information Network (SIDSNET) and Small Island Developing State Technical Assistance Programme (SIDS/TAP) were also welcome.

35. Climate change was an issue of utmost priority for small island States, and the scientific evidence outlined in the second assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change confirmed their worst fears. The report underscored the urgency for the industrialized countries to make an immediate commitment to substantial and additional reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. The Alliance countries did not accept the argument that their proposal for the Kyoto protocol was unrealistic, although it was, certainly, ambitious.

36. It was universally acknowledged, that the existing commitments of industrialized countries under the Framework Convention on Climate Change were inadequate. It was difficult for the Alliance to see the so-called flexibility being sought by some Annex I parties as anything less than an abdication of responsibility and an attempt to shift the onus onto the larger developing countries. It fully endorsed the position of the Group of 77 and China that no new commitments for developing countries should be introduced.

37. The United States and Japan had not demonstrated the leadership the Convention required. The United States' proposal seemed designed merely to delay the achievement of targets for the industrialized countries which had been set for the year 2000, while the proposal by Japan would appear to make non-binding even the small effort proposed. To the Alliance countries, such proposals were simply unacceptable. But, while the opportunity to discuss and negotiate remained, there was still hope that the industrialized countries would show the necessary leadership.

38. **Mr. Ronneberg** (Marshall Islands) said that the chapter of the latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change dealing with regional vulnerabilities to climate change had given the small island developing States an increased sense of urgency. It pointed out that further increases in greenhouse gas emissions could be devastating for those States in particular. The report, compiled by scientists and economists who had become accustomed to a general lack of political will, had stated that perhaps migration was an option that could be pursued with a more realistic hope of success.

39. After two years of negotiations, the picture of the measures the Annex I parties were willing to take had finally become clear. The proposal from the European Union, which at the time of its announcement had seemed inadequate, now appeared bold compared to the modest proposals from Japan and the United States. His delegation was at a loss as to what could possibly be achieved at the Kyoto Conference.

40. Concerning the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Marshall Islands had recently passed legislation to establish biological preserves on the outer islands as part of an effort to empower local authorities and to establish better control over the natural and biological resources of their communities. It was in the process of planning its national communication to the Convention on Biological Diversity, but was encountering difficulties with funding. It was clear that more meaningful international support was required for the Barbados Programme of Action, and that the Small Island Developing States Unit must be strengthened. The proposed meeting between small island developing States and the donor community could be an important opportunity for dialogue on the situation those countries faced.

41. **Mr. Thane Myint** (Myanmar) said that the experience of countries which had already undergone development and had found ways to minimize the detrimental effects of growth on the world environment could be very useful to developing countries such as Myanmar. However, developing countries were often compelled to choose the most expedient path, although it might not be the most beneficial in the long term.

42. Myanmar, although not yet afflicted by desertification, had a central arid zone where environmental degradation had been advancing for many years. Realizing the far-reaching consequences of such degradation, it had implemented a national programme to reclaim that "dry zone", with the aid of Government partners, non-governmental organizations, UNDP and the private sector. The programme had begun to reverse the desertification process and to improve the standard of living of the residents of that zone, mainly due to their active participation. Education in environmental preservation and sustainable farming systems had made a significant impact. From that experience, his delegation was convinced that successful implementation of environmental programmes depended on the active and informed cooperation of the people directly concerned.

43. **Mr. Kaba** (Guinea) said that his Government had ratified all the conventions emanating from the Rio

Conference and that it was in the process of implementing an ambitious national development programme integrating the objectives of sustainable development with the struggle against desertification and poverty. The programme had the active support of the United Nations Development Programme, the European Union, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the United States Agency for International Development and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

44. In cooperation with the OAU and UNEP, his Government had launched a multifaceted project for the protection and management of one of the most important ecosystems in Guinea, the Fouta Djallon massif, a complex mountainous ecosystem, where six of the most important rivers in West Africa had their source. The project would undoubtedly serve as a model for the protection and conservation of shared waterways, and he called upon the international community, specialized agencies of the United Nations and sponsors to increase their support.

45. He hoped that the United Nations and the developed countries would work in partnership to support the struggle against desertification and environmental protection and promote sustainable development on the national and subregional levels, and he looked forward to the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change in Kyoto.

46. **Mr. Brincau** (Malta) said that issues of environment and sustainable development required both cooperation of the international community and the adoption of effective policies at the national level.

47. In reaction to the depletion of the ozone layer, many industries in Malta had resorted to chlorothoro carbon substitutes. His country had established a pollution control coordinating unit and a cleaner technology centre at the University of Malta as control measures. It had also ratified the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution.

48. While the Global Environment Facility's operational strategy in climate change, was a positive step forward, he underlined the importance of a successful outcome of the forthcoming Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. It was important to adopt a protocol or other legal instrument whereby developed countries would undertake to significantly reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. All countries should make arrangements to monitor the reduction of emissions regularly.

49. His delegation supported the recent statement made by the Executive Director of UNEP at the General Assembly of the World Trade Organization which urged WTO and the tourism sector to join UNEP and the insurance industry in a global alliance to counter the fossil fuel lobby, which was working to delay implementation of the Framework Convention on Climate Change. His Government had established a consultative board on the environment, and had engaged the services of six environment officers to deal with problems relating to protected species, biodiversity, air pollution, environmental and ecological zones and managing coastal zones.

50. He hoped that discussions held between the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the International Centre for Science and High Technology on the possibility of having an international coastal zone management instituted in Malta would lead to fruitful results.

51. His delegation attached particular importance to the issue of the availability of freshwater and was therefore pleased that the Commission on Sustainable Development would be focusing at its sixth session on strategic approaches to freshwater management.

52. His delegation took note of the Secretary-General's report contained in document A/52/319 and urged Member States to demonstrate the necessary political will to ensure a successful outcome of the review of the Barbados Programme of Action in 1999.

53. **Mr. Tabai** (South Pacific Forum) said that he strongly supported the proposed reform package and hoped it would lead to more effective development and humanitarian programmes.

54. The focus within the Forum over the previous few years had been primarily on economic reform. Pacific island countries were particularly vulnerable to external economic environmental shocks because of their small size, isolation, location and the openness of their economies. However, only five were currently classified as least developed countries and therefore eligible for trade and technical assistance benefits. The current system for measuring economic status should be reviewed; indicators should reflect economic conditions that were sustainable and should take full account of economic and environmental vulnerability.

55. The Forum was concerned that none of the substantive promises made in Rio concerning greenhouse gas emissions had been kept. The leaders of the Forum at their recent meeting had urged countries to make additional efforts in meeting commitments under the Framework Convention on

Climate Change. They had also called on all participants at the forthcoming Kyoto Conference to pursue vigorously an outcome which would result in the most effective reduction in global greenhouse gas emissions. Furthermore, they encouraged all parties to the Convention to consider fully the draft protocol prepared by the Alliance of Small Island States.

56. While recognizing that the problem was a global one and required global solutions, they believed that the Annex I parties had a leadership role to play in advancing the cause. They urged the Member States to give serious consideration to the dire consequences that would follow if the world community failed to respond to the threat posed by climate change.

57. **Mr. Hetteš** (Slovakia) said that his country supported the international effort for the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and attached great importance to the preparation of a protocol on biosafety. It looked forward to hosting the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention in 1998.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.